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ABSTRACT

In global education programs, emphasis on commonalties shared by all peoples and the understanding and appreciation of differences within various cultures and subcultures may provide strong rationales for those who wish to teach art in a social context. Global education should not be viewed as a discipline with particular content or subject matter, rather it should be seen as an approach to the study of culture that can focus on international concerns or those related to study of students' own local communities. To prepare students to be citizens in a global age, educational efforts need to be undertaken to bring about changes in content, social context, and methods through which cultural values are taught. These changes in terms of a social context include moving from (1) a mono-national context to a multinational context; (2) a mono-cultural context to a multicultural context; and (3) a school-bound context to a community involving context. Art teaching is discussed from multinational, multicultural, and community-based contexts and as part of global education. A 16-item reference list concludes the digest. (DB)

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by
Enid Zimmerman

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Teaching Art From a Global Perspective

by Enid Zimmerman

In global education programs, emphasis on commonalities shared by all peoples and at the same time understanding and appreciation of differences within various cultures and subcultures may provide strong rationales for those who wish to teach art in a social context. Global education should not be viewed as a discipline with particular content or subject matter, rather it should be seen as an approach to the study of culture that can focus on international concerns or those related to study of students' own local communities.

To prepare students to be citizens in a global age, educational efforts need to be undertaken to bring about changes in content, social context, and methods through which cultural values are taught. Anderson (1979) described these changes in terms of social context as moving from (1) a mono-national context to a multinational context; (2) a mono-cultural context to a multicultural context; and (3) a school-bound context to a community involving context. In this Digest, art teaching is discussed from (1) multinational, (2) multicultural, and (3) community-based contexts, and (4) as part of global education.

Teaching Art in a Multinational Context. A few projects and programs developed in the United States during the past decade encompassed mult-national, multicultural, or community contexts as integral to establishing a pluralistic method of teaching art. Of the three methods described by Anderson (1979) for teaching social concepts in global education, the one related to teaching in multinational context has been least developed in the field of art education. One example, WORLD VIEWS THROUGH THE ARTS, had the goal of demonstrating "the interconnectedness of one's life, one's society, and major concerns such as the environment and how these effect our future choices" (Hough & King 1979, 3). This project includes readings from primary sources and art activities organized around themes such as people's needs to create from different cultural perspectives and different ways cultures respond to change. Although the visual arts are not the sole focus of WORLD VIEWS THROUGH THE ARTS, this project presents a viable example of how to internationalize art curricula without making arts study instrumental to other subject areas.

Teaching Art in a Multicultural Context. Anderson's second method of teaching from a social context, multicultural education, had its roots in the 1960s and early 1970s when the civil rights movement influenced educational policies in regard to racism and schooling that led to many reforms, including multicultural education programs.

In the past decade, a few multicultural art projects have ranged from a teacher preparation program to prepare in-service and preservice teachers to teach students from three cultural backgrounds (Rodriguez & Sherman 1983), to a large school district curriculum project in which art was one of a number of curricula areas incorporated into a multicultural approach to education (Los Angeles 1981), to a traveling museum exhibit that featured similarities and differences between Tibetan and Indiana (U.S.) culture at about 1900 (Clark & Zimmerman 1985). Multicultural education art programs and projects in the past decade have been sparse at best. Art education textbooks that focused upon cultural pluralism and multicultural art education reached a zenith in the late 1970s and have been almost absent since, although the issue of cultural pluralism is not dormant among art educators today.

A notable exception is ART EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURALISM (Mason 1988) in which qualitative methods of research are employed to develop both a conceptual basis for curricula design and art programs that explore issues related to multicultural teaching. A continuing contribution since 1983 to research about multicultural art education is the JOURNAL OF MULTI-CULTURAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH IN ART EDUCATION from the United States Society for Education through Art (USEA). Interest in the issue of multicultural art education is evidenced in a renaissance in the field of art education as demonstrated by an increasing number of presentations about this topic at the 1990 National Art Education Association (NAEA) meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, and a newly instituted NAEA multicultural resource register that will collect and facilitate exchange of resources concerning multicultural programs and projects.

Teaching Art in a Community-Based Context. Anderson's (1979) third method of teaching in a community-based social context is evidenced in a few art programs that take art beyond the walls of classrooms and emphasize teaching cultural and aesthetic values. Young (1985) described an art program, conducted in a community center and operated by volunteers, to improve and supplement African-American students' art education. Classes were conducted as a workshop and discussions in which students learned about Afro-American art and history and created art products based on these experiences. In addition, students from a university art education and art therapy program attended a seminar to help develop art curricula that emphasized studying art works from different groups in their community, exploring alternative methods of teaching visual arts, and understanding the cultural and historical background of these various social groups (Blandy & Congdon 1988b). Artists, educators, and community leaders from different ethnic groups were featured speakers and workshop leaders.

Several community-based art education programs have taken place in museums and local art galleries. Blandy and Congdon (1988a) conducted research based on an exhibit they coordinated in which members of a local fishing community worked together to identify common aesthetic values and helped curate an exhibit in which functional objects such as boats and fishing paraphernalia were presented for public viewing. Blandy and Congdon

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recommended developing exhibits to attract new audiences in which art is part of social-cultural contexts and related to the lives of people who view them. Parkash and Shaman (1988, 43) claimed that museums have been silent too long about ethical and social issues and that museums should meet the challenge of educating people about contemporary problems and concerns. Art should not simply be presented for its own sake, they contended; art must be presented so that viewers "gain insights into local and global issues." They advocated using the Science, Technology, and Society (STS) model that advocates socially responsible public choices based on understanding a new type of literacy created by science and technology. STS programs, such as studying an urban habitat and exploring anthropological photography go beyond exposure to aesthetic or cultural artifacts and invite viewers to engage in solving problems related to their local and world-wide communities.

Educating Art Students Globally. Art educators who wish to teach from a global perspective are presented many problems and few solutions. In order to promote what she considered cultural literacy, Boyer (1987, 91) researched development of art students' "skills in critical dialoguing and decoding of their own cultural assumptions." As a means of educating art students globally, Boyer created a program for developing cultural literacy that encouraged students to take an active role in their learning, have concrete educational experiences, and examine their own cultural experiences and beliefs. After conducting a number of research studies about art teachers and students from diverse cultural backgrounds, Stokrocki (1988) concluded that motivation, classroom behavior, student/teacher interaction, and evaluation were four instructional variables that can be manipulated to facilitate art learning. Nadaner (1985) suggested that art teachers use art criticism to decide what objects should be included in an art curriculum and use ethnographic methods to decide what aspects of their students' sub-cultures and the core culture should be emphasized. Nadaner (1984) stressed the need to use sociology of art and social criticism to study certain subjects, such as sex and violence in the media. Art making, he believed, could be reconceived rather than abandoned within a social context by expanding the range of subjects students choose to portray, creating a classroom culture in which political issues are discussed, and having students include critiques as integral parts of their art work.

Most writing about global issues and art education is presently at the advocacy level; it is now time to build a body of scholarship both in theory and practice. Boyer (1987) noted that it is necessary to develop a body of research about cultural literacy using phenomenological methods, social historical methods, cross-cultural perspectives, and projections into the future. A great amount of literature exists related to study of the psychology of the individual, but there is a dearth of sociological research related to art and aesthetics or the interrelatedness and interdependence of subgroups within the core culture.

Sletter and Grant (1987), in a study of over 100 publications related to multicultural education, found that teaching resources were not plentiful and tended to be only separate lessons. Infusing global education into art curricula will necessitate creation of model programs and courses of study that are not only complete, but demonstrate the use of scope and sequence across grades. Art teachers cannot be expected to have in-depth knowledge about the many different cultures in their communities; to be knowledgeable about all cultures throughout the United States and the entire globe is virtually impossible. What is needed are practical materials for teaching as well as financial and emotional support from school administrators, community leaders, teacher educators at university levels, government policy makers, and private foundations.

In 1977, McFee and Degge believed that both national characteristics of people and their art and international trends should be studied in art programs. Their concerns are viable more than a decade later. Art should be studied in contexts in which people are linked through their communities and nations with people in other communities and nations throughout the world. The next decade can become a time of celebrating all people's past accomplishments in the arts and creating a future in which students gain access to global knowledge and understanding in and through art.

References and ERIC Resources

The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are in the ERIC system and are available in microfiche and paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are 703-404-1400 and 800-443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number are annotated monthly in CIJE (CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION), which is available in most libraries. EJ documents are not available through EDRS; however, they can be located in the journal section of most libraries by using the bibliographic information provided below.

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